

Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station Washington, D.C.

A Landmark in Naval Telecommunications

By LCDR George D. Davis III

onuments and landmarks portraying a 227-year-old tapestry of our country's revolutionary transformations envelop the Nation's Capital. It is embellished with static displays of the sacrifices, hardships and patriotism that symbolize the very freedom we enjoy.

Embraced by these age-old buildings, where our founding fathers engineered the very fabric of this nation, sits Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station Washington, D.C. (NCTSW) – the Navy's oldest communications station and the Navy's largest Local Control Center (LCC), situated in the Washington Navy Yard overlooking the Anacostia River.

In 1900, Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. were chosen as the first two locations where Navy radio stations were erected. Two years later, in 1902, these same two sites were selected as the Navy's first "wireless" test stations ashore. Later that same year, seven additional east coast commands joined Washington, D.C. and Annapolis as the first naval



The 1938 commissioning photo (top) for the U.S. Naval Radio Station in Cheltenham, Md., and a 1955 photo of Navy radio operators at the station.

shore radio stations. Washington, D.C. was also designated as the "receiver" laboratory while New York served as the "transmitter" laboratory during the early years of long-haul communications.

The Naval Radio Service was reorganized, and the Department of the Navy established the Office of Communications in 1915. U.S. Naval Radio Station, Cheltenham, Md. was commissioned in 1938.

In 1941, the first teletypewriter circuit was installed in Washington D.C., Norfolk, Philadelphia, New York, New London, Boston, and Portsmouth. The naval message reporting the abhorrent devastation of our naval forces at Pearl Harbor was transmitted to Washington, D.C. alerting the nation of the Japanese air raids that ruthlessly seemed to paralyze the nation in shock, horror and disbelief.

The original copy of this message is framed and located at NCTS Washington, D.C. The actual message transmitted reads:

"INTERCEPT 7 DEC 1941
AIR RAID ON PEARL HARBOR X
THIS IS NO DRILL
HOSTILITIES WITH JAPAN
COMMENCED WITH AIR RAID ON
PEARL HARBOR
SND BOATS TO FORD ISLAND
I MUST HAVE INSTANTANEOUS
RELAY FOR MY DISPATCHES"

In 1945, the war with Japan ended with photo coverage of the Japanese surrender onboard the battleship USS Missouri. Pictures of the event were facsimiled to Washington, D.C. from Tokyo Bay within two hours from the time of the ceremony.

Washington, D.C. holds the distinction of the world's longest distance record of a facsimile transmission from Antarctica – 10,581 miles in 1946. Earth terminals located in

Washington, D.C. and San Diego, Calif. permitted the first Moon bounce message relay in 1955, and one year later the first successful message transmission was achieved via Moon relay to Hawaii.

In 1959, the U.S. Naval Communications System, with a headquarters in Washington, D.C., was established to operate, coordinate and administer naval communications. That same year, U.S. Naval Radio Station, Cheltenham, Md., was reconfigured with automated systems to end 40 years of continuous service as a relay station. In 1989, the station was closed all together as a com-

munications facility and relocated to its current location on the historic Washington Navy Yard.

Three of the civilian personnel transplanted from Cheltenham to the Washington Navy Yard still serve today. Beverly Blume celebrated 32 years of civil service, all at NCTS Washington, in September.

Blume has witnessed and taken part in the many transformations of naval communications – largely from paper to automated communications systems. She currently serves as the Multi-Level Mail Server (MMS) and Defense Message System (DMS) administrator and has been instrumental in NCTS Washington's cutover to DMS 2.2 and DMS 3.0.

Beaudina Taper, administrative officer, has been assigned since 1981. Her career began 22 years ago serving a multitude of security and administrative jobs.

Linda Reamy, NCTS' financial manager, has been with NCTS Washington since 1985. As the financial manager in Cheltenham, Reamy's office was the last to relocate to the Washington Navy Yard.

Outstanding Service Amidst Tragedy

Prior to their relocation, these same three employees took part in placing various items in a time capsule, which is buried at the front entrance of Building 1 beneath a concrete placard. "We put everything in there to mark the time," explains Blume.

Taper and Reamy add, "The time capsule has an assortment of memorabilia. Not just communications-related items, but things like diapers, Tide soap, newspapers, magazines, money and punch tape."

Comments Reamy, "The time capsule was buried in 1988 on the 50th anniversary of the opening of Cheltenham Communications Station with the intent it will be opened on the command's 100th anniversary."

The command suffered a personal tragedy on Sept. 11, 2001. This devastation epitomized a one-of-a-kind, deeply rooted example of the brilliant teamwork within the command.



Additional historical photos depict personnel and operations at the U.S. Naval Radio Station, Cheltenham Md., from 1959 (top) and 1960.



Seven of our Navy's finest assigned to NCTSW within the Chief of Naval Operations' Telecommunications Center (TCC) were killed. The terrorist attack against the Pentagon destroyed the entire Voice Communications spaces.

Tough times were ahead, but during this crucial time in NCTSW history, the command stood tall and proud to honor fallen shipmates and to maintain our guard against terrorism. Words cannot describe the cohesiveness one team can bring after the pain of such devastation.

Selected as the LCC of the Year in 2001, NCTSW demonstrated outstanding service to their customers during the transition to DMS 2.2. NCTSW is

the Navy's largest LCC and currently services over 500 commands in 24 states.

The bar was again raised on June 11, 2002 when NCTSW became the first activity on the Washington Navy Yard – and one of the first in the Navy - to successfully complete the transition to the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI). The command was the first of 40 locations within the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Atlantic (NCTAMS LANT) claimancy to cutover to NMCI.

As a resident expert on NMCI, NCTSW has provided numerous lessons learned for the entire NCTAMS LANT claimancy and support to over 1,500 NMCI seat installations on the Washington Navy Yard and surrounding capital region commands.

The oldest Communication Station is nestled inside the beltway of our Nation's Capital. The 102-year-old command has witnessed numerous historical events. It is only fitting that the first communication station be assigned to the Navy's first shore installation – the Washington Navy Yard – a time capsule of our Navy's heritage.